

Essay #5:

## **Waiting for Heaven with Joy**

Written by Rev. Ezequiel Sánchez, Mexico  
Presented by Rev. Mario Domínguez, Mexico  
Translated into English by Pastor Michael Hartman

### **I. Heaven, Our Future Home**

*Oh, heavenly Jerusalem! Oh, when will I see you?  
Your glory which the righteous see, when will I rejoice?  
Beloved heavenly homeland, Stranger to pain,  
Those who suffer hard sadness, your love will comfort them.*

*Without shadows I will meditate:  
There is life and light in you;  
The star will shine eternally there.  
The King of Glory, My Jesus, I will see you reigning there;  
My soul will be filled with never-ending light in that Zion.<sup>1</sup>*

As I began this paper, I found myself very nervous, wondering how I would share with you everything concerning heaven. While I was wondering where to begin, my eldest daughter came up to me and asked me, “Daddy, what are you working on?” I replied “I am writing about what the Scriptures tell us about heaven,” and I asked her, “What does heaven mean to you?” She told me, very simply, “It means to go to my home.”

My esteemed brothers, what great joy I felt that an eleven-year-old child might say it so simply. All those who are here know very well that we are going to heaven. We have learned this since we were very young. But, all the same, there is a lot of misinformation out there concerning heaven. This bad information comes from many of today’s religious leaders. Some say that it does not exist. Others tell us that heaven is found right here. And still others even give the impression that we cannot get there. Therefore, we have the singular responsibility to

---

<sup>1</sup>These two stanzas are translated from the Spanish hymn “¡Oh, célica Jerusalén!” which is found in *Culto Cristiano*, Editorial El Escudo, New York, 1978. (Hymn #342) The hymn is sung to the melody of “America the Beautiful.”

## ESSAY

obtain our information solely from the Scriptures. They show us with sufficient clarity what we can expect. Our confidence is strengthened when we draw out from Scripture words that tell us everything we need to know, even when the answers which are given do not follow human logic. The fact is that natural man comes up with a limitless amount of explanations for heaven. Some, including weak believers, consider heaven to be a place which is so holy that it is impossible to live there because they are sinful. As ministers of the Lord we have many opportunities to share this message of heaven: opportunities to share it with those who feel alone, with those who are sad, with those who live certain of heaven, etc. As believers we rejoice in the promise of heaven. We know that our life will not end here. We rejoice because right now we enjoy knowing God, who has given us life by rescuing us for a new life that we do not deserve. We rejoice in praising Him, in giving our treasures, our time and our talents to Him. We enjoy Him right now. But without a doubt, in heaven our joy will be even greater. It is a joy that the Enemy cannot stop, since he has been defeated. It is a joy that death cannot triumph over, since Christ triumphed over death. And it is a joy which the world cannot give. It is blessing in its most complete form. We wait even though it seems tiring. Nevertheless, we are not abandoned while we wait. We have the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who enables us to focus right now on the marvels which God has done in the past. The Holy Spirit enables us not to forget that Christ came to save a world fallen in sin. Our wait is joyful simply because we will see our God face to face and always be by His side.

We believe that God will grant eternal life to us and to all those who believe in Christ. The person who does not believe this simply does not believe the Gospel. Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life."<sup>2</sup> With these words of Jesus, he emphasized that He is the only way to heaven. We could not go there directly if it were not by means of Him. Eternal life is a certainty which we have by believing in Him. "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have

---

<sup>2</sup>John 6:47. Unless otherwise noted, all the verses have been taken from the NIV. (In Spanish they originally came from the Reina Valera 1960.)

eternal life.”<sup>3</sup> Without a doubt, the story of the serpent which was lifted up in the desert served to teach Nicodemus about the doctrine of Heaven. Jesus shared this story with him in order to explain that he also needed to be lifted up, but lifted up on a cross. We recall that everyone who looked at the serpent was healed from his bite. In the same way, everyone who might look at Jesus with faith will be saved from eternal death and has life. This is a universal promise. It does not exclude anyone. Rather, it belongs to each and every person who believes. It is very simple and personal. Nicodemus, upon hearing the promise, knew that the hope of Heaven was offered to him. “My sheep listen to my voice . . . [and] I give them eternal life.”<sup>4</sup> The relationship with Christ will be an eternal relationship. This is due to the intimate and personal relationship which exists between Jesus and His followers, as well as the fact that He is the Christ, the Son of God. We, the believers, will never be lacking words of comfort. With Jesus Christ we are always sure. This is reality for believers. Thanks to the fact that Christ has shared with us the truth that by believing in His work of redemption, we can think that Heaven is where we will dwell.

When we meditate on the term “heaven” we realize that Scripture uses this term in various ways. Heaven is where the birds fly. Heaven is where the celestial bodies can be found. And heaven is God’s dwelling place. It is this last usage that we want to focus on at this moment. The fact is that heaven is one of the sweetest terms in our vocabulary because it is the term that God uses to speak of the home of all who will receive eternal life. Many questions enter our heart. Further along we will speak of these matters, but I share with you the certainty that enough has been revealed to us by our Lord in order to give us the certainty that it is a place of eternal blessings. But this blessing is so great that, just as I wrote, our human minds are incapable of understanding it completely.

Earlier I wrote, Scripture also uses the term heaven to speak of the place where the birds fly. “God said, ‘Let the water teem with living creatures, and let the birds fly above the earth,

---

<sup>3</sup>John 3:14,15

<sup>4</sup>John 10:27,28

ESSAY

across the expanse of [heaven].”<sup>5</sup> But, at the same time, the term is used to refer to the place where God put the sun, the moon and the stars.

God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of [heaven] to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the [heaven] to give light on the earth.” And it was so. God made two great lights—the greater to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars.<sup>6</sup>

We will not spend much time on this point as we all agree in what the Scriptures say—the firmament that is over us is also known as *heaven*.

Scripture helps us maintain a good concept as to what heaven is. Despite the different uses of the term, and the fact that Scripture describes heaven with various names, our dogmaticians have explained it clearly. Saint Paul, in the second letter to the Corinthians, tells us, “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven.”<sup>7</sup> What is Paul referring to in this text when he says, “third heaven”? Professor David Valleskey says, “Paul is possibly using terminology used by the Jews of his day . . .”<sup>8</sup> It does not surprise us that Paul refers to paradise as the third heaven. This man was taken to the presence of God, to paradise, where everything is beautiful and perfect just as it was in the garden of Eden. It is interesting that Jesus also uses the term paradise to describe heaven. These were the words which he used when he spoke to the thief next to him on the cross: “Today you will be with me in paradise.”<sup>9</sup> Another illustration can be found in Scripture which describes what it is like to be eternally in the presence of God. Paradise is described in Rev-

---

<sup>5</sup>Genesis 1:20. As with the Hebrew word שָׁמַיִם, Spanish does not have separate words for sky and heaven, rather it solely uses the word “cielos” to refer to both.

<sup>6</sup>Genesis 1:14-16

<sup>7</sup>2 Corinthians 12:2

<sup>8</sup>David J. Valleskey. *2 Corinthians* People’s Bible. Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, 1998. (p. 222)

<sup>9</sup>Luke 23:43

WAITING FOR HEAVEN WITH JOY

elation with these words: “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”<sup>10</sup> Jesus wants all to be a part of the victorious celebration around the tree of life, which is in paradise. This word, paradise or garden, reminds us of the garden of Eden. We see that he who overcomes will have access to the tree of life.<sup>11</sup>

In the Gospel of St. John, Jesus refers to this *place* as “My Father’s house” which has many rooms.<sup>12</sup> Here He puts forth the idea of home, rest, and communion. By nature, human beings do not have a place in the house of God because sin closed the pathway. Jesus’ death was the payment for sins and the mansion was prepared by means of his resurrection. This was the sign that everything is now ready. There is a place with the Father which awaits all disciples by means of His Word. Jesus comes to invite us to enter. In his second coming, he will return to welcome us to our home. Disciples know the way. Jesus has shown the way and he has demonstrated that, indeed, there is a specific place where we will be.

The book of Hebrews speaks of a “heavenly country” as the place which we are headed to. In the same way, in ancient times, Israel was directed to the land of Canaan; the promised land.

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.<sup>13</sup>

The author correctly concludes that they were looking for a homeland. A homeland that was promised to them by the Sav-

---

<sup>10</sup>Revelation 2:7

<sup>11</sup>Revelation 22:14

<sup>12</sup>John 14:2

<sup>13</sup>Hebrews 11:13-16

ESSAY

ior. Heaven is the true home for believers because it is there where God lives with His angels. Scripture describes Moses speaking of the place where God lives. “Look down from heaven, your holy dwelling place, and bless your people Israel.”<sup>14</sup> There are many other references in Scripture which tell us that heaven is God’s residence; a *place*, though a spiritual one, far from our dimensional perspective, not found in our line of sight or logic.

Nevertheless, we clearly understand that our triune God is not limited by heaven. As Solomon writes, “The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you.”<sup>15</sup> Rahab also confesses, “The LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.”<sup>16</sup> Scripture clearly recognizes that our triune God is present in every place. That way we can say that God is found in heaven, because to be by His side is to be under His blessing.

It is very common among modern theologians to question if the eternal blessings of the redeemed will include only a state of existence or conscience. There is no doubt that modern theologians speak more of heaven as a present spiritual state, which is a position far from that of Scripture. But, it is true that when the Bible speaks of the state of the believer and the place, those are far above the time and space that our human mind can imagine. When we focus on the inspired Word of God rather than on our own imagination and human logic, it becomes very evident that heaven is a place. There are a few references which ratify this truth, and they are solid. Scripture is very clear on the fact that God created heaven. “Sovereign Lord . . . you made the heaven.”<sup>17</sup> Heaven belongs to God. “The highest heavens belong to the LORD.”<sup>18</sup> It is a place where God dwells and so Jesus invited us to pray, “Our Father in heaven.”<sup>19</sup> Peter confirms that heaven is a real place where God carefully guards the

---

<sup>14</sup>Deuteronomy 26:15

<sup>15</sup>1 Kings 8:27

<sup>16</sup>Joshua 2:11

<sup>17</sup>Acts 4:24

<sup>18</sup>Psalms 115:16

<sup>19</sup>Matthew 6:9

inheritance which has been prepared for the sons of God; “kept in heaven for you.”<sup>20</sup>

## **II. We Will Enjoy our Eternal Stay**

Our greatest joy concerning heaven is that our Triune God, in His entire splendor, will be there. Just as Job trusted that he would see God, we too will see Him. In Job 19:26 we hear his words: “and after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God.” Our Savior promised in Matthew 5:8 that the pure in heart will see God. It is marvelous that we, as redeemed persons, will be there, as eternal trophies of God’s wonderful grace. Believers of all ages, cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, will be wearing white robes of salvation. We will be there with glorified bodies, just like the glorified body of our Resurrected Savior. Yes, it is true; God has prepared glorified bodies for us, when the mortal one will be absorbed by our earthly life.

Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.<sup>21</sup>

We will fully enjoy the holiness given to us. Never again will we sadden Christ’s heart with our tendencies to sin. There will be no boasting, and none of us will say that he arrived at heaven’s gate by his own merits. There will be no envy, nor criticism, nor gossiping. Never again will we be afflicted. All of the manifestations of the flesh will give place to the fruit of the Spirit. The Lord will present us “without fault and with great joy.”<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup>1 Peter 1:4

<sup>21</sup>2 Corinthians 5:1-5

<sup>22</sup>Jude 24

## ESSAY

All sadness and sighs, tears and weeping will no longer be known. The anguish over losing a loved one will not occur again. Life will be free of tension, confusion, and agitation. All anxieties and emotional problems will remain forever in the past. We will not suffer from sickness, as our glorified bodies will not allow it. "There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."<sup>23</sup> The redeemed followers in heaven will not hunger or thirst, "for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water."<sup>24</sup> This promise produces joy and special anticipation for those that have suffered in this life. At the right hand of God we will enjoy what we could not find here in this world. As David writes in Psalm 16:11, "You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand." Death will no longer exist.

In the book of Revelation we read that in heaven the saints will be prostrated, worshipping. There will be true and perfect adoration. It will not be imperfect on our part, and our mind will not wander during worship. In heaven we will be worshipping in front of the blessed Triune God, and throughout all eternity our heart will pound with spiritual joy from living in the light of the glory of God.

In heaven we will be in the Lord's presence, and God "himself will be with them and be their God."<sup>25</sup> The presence of the Lord will characterize heaven, just as He is and will be. "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face."<sup>26</sup> Now we see and understand very little, and the reason for this is that God has revealed to us only some details about life in the eternal kingdom of God. It is as if the curtain was opened only a little in order to give us a slight glimmer of that life. John wrote that the redeemed will see his face.<sup>27</sup> As I said awhile back, we will enjoy heaven because it will also be a rest from our work.

---

<sup>23</sup>Revelation 21:4

<sup>24</sup>Revelation 7:17

<sup>25</sup>Revelation 21:3

<sup>26</sup>1 Corinthians 13:12

<sup>27</sup>Revelation 22:14

#### WAITING FOR HEAVEN WITH JOY

Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."<sup>28</sup>

Many Christians have used these words in preparation for death and so dissipated all fear of it. Those who die with saving faith know where they are going the very moment they leave this valley of tears. They will then rest from their work.

We will be eternally worshipping the Lord, but let us not understand this incorrectly. We will not be lazy. "No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him."<sup>29</sup> We know that we will serve the Lord. He will utilize us for all eternity. We should not find it strange that today some of us might think that serving God on this earth is like being in heaven, but complete service will be found in heaven because that is where perfect holiness will be. What a marvelous combination! Service and worship. "After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: 'Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God.'"<sup>30</sup>

So now we have very pleasing news. We know that those redeemed by God will receive the kingdom "prepared for you since the creation of the world."<sup>31</sup> It is also indicated that the apostle Paul hoped to receive the crown of righteousness. Revelation paints a picture of the inhabitants of heaven throwing down their crowns before the throne of God.<sup>32</sup> "Love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked."<sup>33</sup> Jesus promises a reward to those who act in this way. He used the same word in 6:23, "reward in heaven." This mention of a reward in no way implies that

---

<sup>28</sup>Revelation 14:13

<sup>29</sup>Revelation 22:3

<sup>30</sup>Revelation 12:1

<sup>31</sup>Matthew 25:34

<sup>32</sup>Revelation 4:10

<sup>33</sup>Luke 6:35

ESSAY

we are saved by our good works, nor because of our love. Rather, the reward that Jesus promises is free and given mercifully in order to comfort His disciples. It will be a heavenly reward. 1 Corinthians 3:8,14,15 teaches:

The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor . . . If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

This text appears to teach us the existence of degrees of celestial rewards, also known as levels of glory. On the other hand, it is certain that when the New Testament speaks of the inheritance of believers, that the blessing received in heaven will be equal for all. That blessing will be a peaceful happiness. Paul also says, "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously."<sup>34</sup> There are no secrets concerning the principles that the Judge will follow when he issues out rewards. He has been completely open with us so that we might know beforehand how we can run to win. Without a doubt, we are encouraged when we consider the following thoughts. Faithfulness will be rewarded, not success.

His master replied, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"<sup>35</sup>

Paul says, "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful."<sup>36</sup> We cannot always be successful, but we can attempt to maintain ourselves as faithful. It is not how great a gift we have or how much ability we possess. Rather, what is important is how we employ them.

To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had

---

<sup>34</sup>2 Corinthians 9:6

<sup>35</sup>Matthew 25:21,23

<sup>36</sup>1 Corinthians 4:2

WAITING FOR HEAVEN WITH JOY

received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master's money.

After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. "Master," he said, "you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more."

His master replied, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"

The man with the two talents also came. "Master," he said, "you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more."

His master replied, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness."

Then the man who had received the one talent came. "Master," he said, "I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you."

His master replied, "You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well, then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

"Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents."<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup>Matthew 25:15-28

ESSAY

We have not all received the same abilities, but certainly the Lord emits his judgment according to how each one has used what He has given them. It is not so much the class of service rendered, rather the spirit with which it was done.

Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.<sup>38</sup>

We do all things thinking that they are for the Lord, and not for men. We enjoy remembering that He does not like a spirit which attempts to barter with the Lord, asking, "What's my part?"<sup>39</sup> I believe that desire will be rewarded even when the results we might wish for have not been realized. "The Lord said to my father David, 'Because it was in your heart to build a temple for my Name, you did well to have this in your heart.'<sup>40</sup> "For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have."<sup>41</sup> David was not permitted to build the temple, but God congratulated him for having the desire in his heart. It is not the amount that is worth something, rather the attitude of the heart. "And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."<sup>42</sup> The widow who only threw two coins in the offering is a constant reminder of this.<sup>43</sup> We would say that it is not how we might evaluate each other's service, but rather how the Lord evaluates it.

The righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and

---

<sup>38</sup>Colossians 3:22-24

<sup>39</sup>Matthew 19:27-30

<sup>40</sup>1 Kings 8:18

<sup>41</sup>2 Corinthians 8:12

<sup>42</sup>Matthew 10:42

<sup>43</sup>Luke 21:2

WAITING FOR HEAVEN WITH JOY

invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."<sup>44</sup>

It is not what the rest see, but what God sees and knows.<sup>45</sup> If we do something to receive public approval, and it is publicly approved, we have already received our reward—only a public one.

So, we can say that there will be degrees of glory in heaven, but we cannot, in every sense, describe what they will consist of. What we can be sure of is that all the redeemed will rejoice in a perfect state of happiness. In this eternal happiness, which we describe as blessings, there will not be differences between one over the other, because eternal happiness is seeing God and we will see Him. In summary, the degrees of glory will be given as a prize, but not as something deserved. They will be based on His grace which he shows to all those who in their earthly lives demonstrated their faith in service dedicated to the Lord.<sup>46</sup> I should point out that this difference in glory will not produce envy, as that is a sin<sup>47</sup> and sin will be completely abolished in the future life of the redeemed.<sup>48</sup>

To be precise we would say that we know a few facts about heaven. The earthly conditions will not exist. "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind."<sup>49</sup> We know that there will be no marriage. "At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven."<sup>50</sup> We know that we will be one flock. There will be no divisions. "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and

---

<sup>44</sup>Matthew 25:37-40

<sup>45</sup>Matthew 6:1-18

<sup>46</sup>Luke 19:12-19

<sup>47</sup>Galatians 5:20

<sup>48</sup>Psalms 17:15; 16:11

<sup>49</sup>Isaiah 65:17

<sup>50</sup>Matthew 22:30

## ESSAY

there shall be one flock and one shepherd.”<sup>51</sup> We know that there will be no war between governments, or any earthly vocations, nor denominational divides. There will not be a division of languages. Those from all nations and languages will be united. “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.”<sup>52</sup> There will be no sickness, pain, poverty, sadness, or death. “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”<sup>53</sup>

### **III. Maintaining our Eyes on Heaven**

By means of the sacrament of Holy Baptism we have received the seal, the guarantee which is the Holy Spirit. He has given us faith and certainty in the Gospel that says that we are His adopted sons and heirs destined to receive all His glorious riches. Without a doubt, our baptism was when we began looking towards heaven; and we continue to be strengthened with the words of the Gospel which offers us food for our soul. Yes, it is true, we enjoy feeding the hope which we have, and one place where this happens is every time we participate in the Lord’s Supper. God does his work and fortifies our redeemed lives. God shares His peace through the means of grace, and this peace is yours by means of Christ Jesus. Though your conscience accuses you along the pathway to heaven. Though the world points out your many failures. Though Satan tries to infuse fear into your soul, causing you to remember your many sins, in order to erase your vision of heaven and the forgiveness you have received from Christ. Though these things happen, you can know that you have indeed been completely reconciled to Him. Jesus has announced this to you. And He is the foundation; the capstone on which your soul rests while it awaits the eternal mansion and complete blessing. It is in Christ that we have learned to deposit the entire weight of our trials,

---

<sup>51</sup>John 10:16

<sup>52</sup>Revelation 7:9

<sup>53</sup>Revelation 21:4; Isaiah 25:8

#### WAITING FOR HEAVEN WITH JOY

trusting that He will take over responsibility for them. We have commended into His hands our yesterday and our today, knowing that He maintains us in His grace. And while we wait for tomorrow, we commend our souls to His mercy.

This side of heaven can be very beautiful; but heaven will be more. All that which surrounds us puts pressure on us, but we are confident because of God's promises. The night He was betrayed, there in the shadow of death, Jesus promised them heaven. These words are also for us. There is something beyond our grave. It is heaven. We are determined to maintain our hope of heaven with its great glory and splendor. Knowing that eternity exists is our great comfort and strength and joy. It is there. A home in which friendship with the Father prevails. We can be sure that there is space for us because He, who poured on us all of his mercy, has promised to reserve us a place. This hope feeds us, His disciples, making the means of grace our sole help on this side of heaven. These means of grace, which are filled with His powerful promises, assure us that we will inhabit heaven. They make heaven become visible to us. Alongside Paul we can say, "I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day."<sup>54</sup> We can be certain that Christ has the power to fulfill His promises. "If it was not so, I would have told you," says the Lord. It was by means of his resurrection that he triumphed and now his victory is also ours. Because of Him, we will rise and the first thing that we will see will be our God, ready to share eternity with us. We will live in heaven solely because God has freely extended his goodwill and grace to us. Without a doubt, we could also say alongside Paul, "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far."<sup>55</sup> And he also said, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."<sup>56</sup> Those who are present right now at this meeting will not have the opportunity to see each other again, but if we remain in His Word, heaven is the place where we will run into each other again.

---

<sup>54</sup>2 Timothy 1:12

<sup>55</sup>Philippians 1:23

<sup>56</sup>Philippians 1:21

ESSAY

We look to the end with anticipation and joy. For us it is liberation. For us it is the beginning of all good things. May God help us continue to look forward with anticipation. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has saved us from all our sins and has opened the eternal doors to the celestial city, be with all of us. Amen.



Mario Dominguez of Mexico